

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Finding of No Significant Impact
Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-CO-S010-2014-0011-EA**

April, 2015

**LPEA Powerline ROW Renewal and Modification
B141 Single to Three Phase**

Location:

New Mexico Principal Meridian, Colorado
T. 34 N., R. 8 W.,
Sec. 12;
T. 34 N., R. 7 W.,
Sec. 7.

The area described contains 2.6 acres.

Applicant/Address:

**La Plata Electric Association, Inc.
45 Stewart Street
PO Box 2750
Durango, CO 81302**

**Tres Rios Field Office
29211 Hwy 184
Dolores, CO 81323
970-882-7296
970-882-6841 (fax)**



FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-CO-S010-2014-0011-EA

LPEA Powerline ROW Renewal and Modification

B141 Single to Three Phase

INTRODUCTION:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has conducted an environmental analysis DOI-BLM-CO-S010-2014-0011 for a proposed action to address the upgrading of an existing overhead power line from a single phase to a three phase electric line. The project would consist of renewing LPEA's current ROW for a 30 year term and amending the ROW to allow for the upgrade. The upgraded power line would allow for increased capacity to deliver power to members in the area. The upgraded capacity would reduce or eliminate loss of power events and is part of a long range improvement project. The LPEA Powerline ROW Renewal and Modification B141 Single to Three Phase EA #DOI-BLM-CO-S011-2014 is available at the Tres Rios Field Office and is incorporated by reference for this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). A no action alternative and proposed action alternatives were analyzed in the EA.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the project is not a major federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects described in the Tres Rios RMP/FEIS. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed.

This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described:

Context The project is a site-specific action directly involving approximately 2.6 acres of BLM administered land that by itself does not have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance.

Intensity: The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27 and incorporated into resources and issues considered (includes supplemental authorities Appendix 1 H-1790-1) and supplemental Instruction Memorandum, Acts, regulations and Executive Orders.

The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

1. **Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse.** The proposed action would impact resources as described in the EA. Mitigating measures to reduce impacts to noxious weeds, native vegetation, wetlands and wildlife were incorporated in the design of the action alternatives. Treatment of noxious weeds would be required as part of the terms and conditions of the ROW issued, for the 30 year term. Ground disturbance, such as the auguring involved in installing the power poles, can provide an opportunity for noxious weeds and non-native invasive species to become established and spread. Construction vehicles accessing the ROW could potentially spread noxious weeds and non-native invasive species. Mitigation measures and stipulations identified in the Proposed Action would limit the spread or introduction of noxious weeds. Impacts to soil would include temporary reduced capacity for plant growth due to removal and/or disturbance of the soil. Mitigation identified in the Proposed Action combined with minimal ground disturbance activities would result in negligible impacts to soil resources. Temporary impacts to migratory birds would include increased noise and disturbance from construction activity. A timing restriction of May 1 through June 30 for vegetation removal would be implemented to prevent impacts to nesting migratory birds. A timing restriction of February 1 through July 31 would be implemented for nesting raptors. None of the environmental effects discussed in detail in the EA and associated appendices are considered significant, nor do the effects exceed those described in the Tres Rios RMP/FEIS.
2. **The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety.** The proposed action is designed to allow the safe installation of 19 power poles. The project area would be accessed from BLM lands and construction would be conducted within the existing LPEA ROW on unpaved surfaces. Human health and safety would be addressed in LPEA's construction plan.
3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** The historic and cultural resources of the area have been inventoried and no resources potentially eligible for listing or currently listed on the National Register were found present within or adjacent to the project.

The following components of the Human Environment and Resource Issues are not affected because they are not present in the project area (rationale in parenthesis): Air Quality (negligible effect), Greenhouse Gas emissions (negligible effect), Areas of Critical Concern (not present), Geological resources (negligible effect), Native American Religious Concerns (no concerns identified through tribal consultation), Prime or Unique Farm lands (not present), Forest lands and management (negligible effects), Fire (no effect), Floodplains (negligible effect), Rangeland management (negligible effect), Recreation (no effect), Socioeconomic values (negligible effect), Threatened, Endangered or Sensitive Species and Critical Habitats (not present), Visual resources (negligible effect), Wastes, hazardous and solid (negligible effect), Wild and Scenic rivers (not present), Wilderness (not present), Wildlife, Aquatic and Terrestrial (including migratory birds) (negligible effect).

4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** There is no scientific controversy over the nature of the impacts.
5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The project is not unique or unusual. The BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas. The environmental effects to the human environment are fully analyzed in the EA. There are no predicted effects on the human environment that are considered to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.
6. **The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.** The actions considered in the selected alternative were considered by the interdisciplinary team within the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. A complete analysis of the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the selected alternative and all other alternatives is described in Chapter 4 of the EA.
7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts – which include connected actions regardless of land ownership.** The interdisciplinary team evaluated the possible actions in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. A complete disclosure of the effects of the project is contained in Chapter 4 of the EA.
8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** The project will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will it cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. A cultural inventory for the proposed action revealed and no historic properties are affected. An informational letter was mailed to the SHPO on 1/30/2015 for the BLM portion of the project. US Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE) consulted with SHPO on 3/25/2015 on the non-BLM portion of the project. SHPO concurred with USACOE on 4/2/2015.
9. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, or the degree to which the action may adversely affect: 1) a proposed to be listed endangered or threatened species or its habitat, or 2) a species on BLM's sensitive species list.** The proposed activity is within an existing power line right of way (ROW) on BLM lands. .6 acres of additional disturbance will have no impact on species listed under the endangered species act or BLM special status species if

the mitigation measures identified (timing restrictions) are implemented. Timing restrictions include no activity December 1 through April 30 in order to protect winter concentrations of elk and mule deer; no activity February 1 through July 31, unless a clearance survey for nesting raptors is completed; no vegetation removal may occur May 1 through June 30 to protect nesting migratory birds.

- 10. Whether the action threatens a violation of a federal, state, local, or tribal law, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environment, where non-federal requirements are consistent with federal requirements.** The project does not violate any known federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. State, local, and tribal interests were given the opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process. Furthermore, letters were sent to 25 Native American tribes concerning consulting party status. Five tribes responded, the Hopi, Navajo Nation, Pueblo of Santa Ana, Pueblo of Santa Clara, and Pueblo of Leguna, without any concerns. In addition, the project is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs.


Authorized Officer


Date

